[758 cont.]

Silversmiths and blacksmiths are almost the only artisans; the former occupied themselves earlier with the ornamentation of weapons in particular; the latter, of whom there are two or three in every village, make dagger blades, sickles, bits for horses, horseshoes, and the like. Among the Abkhaz their profession is particularly honored and esteemed (see p. 25 , cf. Africa).

In earlier times trade was based exclusively on barter. Before the incursion of the Russians (end of the eighteenth century), the Cherkess traded salt, among other things, to the Osset, bringing it on large, two-

Fig. 450. Cherkess pistol with flintlock, bone pommel, and silver fittings (1/4 natural size) (Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg).

wheeled carts, drawn by six to eight oxen, from the salt-lakes along the Caspian Sea between Terek and Kuma. As products of their industry they sold principally wax, honey, skins, cloth, capes, and the like, as well as slaves. Linen material in pieces the size of a shirt served as a measure of value for all wares.

At that time the men, when not engaged in war, devoted themselves by preference to hunting and raiding. In order not to be understood by other people, and also to confuse the game, two kinds of secret language were used: the words in the one (šakobže) are completely different from the Cherkess language; in the other (faršipse) a ri or fe is inserted after every syllable.

/15 cont./

462 [281] [513] [912] •437 morocco-leather (tsush) so popular with foreigners; this tsush serves in Abkhazia for bedding in summer. The men make beautiful spoons out of wood and animal horns. Many hunters kill seven or eight bears a year, but do not sell the skins. In general buying and selling in Abkhazia are done by barter; money is not used in these cases.

433 [231] [541] The main sources of food of the Abkhaz are agriculture, cattle-breeding, and to a certain extent, apiculture. In the foothills the Abkhaz often possess as many as 200 and more beehives. Nowadays they sow maize and occasionally wheat. A few years ago, gomi (ghomi) /millet/ was considered the main and most widespread cereal, but now maize has completely supplanted it. Besides this, tobacco, cotton, flax, hemp, and vegetables are sown, but in limited quantity and only for home use.

233 [556] Cattle constitute the main wealth of the Abkhaz; in their opinion this is the main support of the life of man; it is what feeds him, makes him grow, and preserves him. The Abkhaz cannot conceive of life without cattle; one can somehow manage to get along without bread, but not without cattle. This conception is especially true of the herdsmen, of whom it [262] may be said /16/ that they live almost exclusively on meat and milk. To feed his herd, not infrequently consisting of no more than two or three head of cattle, the Abkhaz, when grass gave out in one place, would move to another place where grass was easier to find, taking along his phatskha (hut of wattles). So it [178] was until the last war; after that the main attention of the [243] Abkhaz was concentrated on the sowing of maize, the export of which is growing day by day.

342 The structure of the Abkhaz house, the phatskha, is simple. In appearance it is round or rectangular. The walls of the phatskha slope upwards and are woven together with thin nut-twigs; on top of these rests a cone-shaped roof; the top of the cone is tied together with willow-branches or twigs; the branches are supported by little poles (dardzagini /see foreign text/). This [824] simple structure is covered with ferns, reeds, or spear-grass (Agrostis vulgaris).